

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA, THE PACIFIC, AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Opening Statement

March 17, 2010

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this important hearing regarding the critical relationship between the United States and Japan. I want to underscore my deep appreciation for this long-standing friendship and alliance that we share with Japan. This important partnership between our two countries is needed now than ever before.

I am delighted to announce that Ambassador Fujisaki of Japan has graciously agreed to visit Rockford College, which is located in the northwestern Illinois congressional district that I have the honor to represent. This will be the second time that Japan's chief envoy to the U.S. has travelled to Illinois; the first time was in 2007 during the visit of former Ambassador Kato. Thus, I want to publically thank the good people of Japan for sending able and distinguished statesmen such as Ambassadors Fujisaki and Kato to America. Their contributions to the relationship between our two countries cannot be overstated.

The northern Illinois congressional district that I represent has a long and positive relationship with Japan. Foreign direct investments by Japanese companies continue to support countless jobs in the district. For example, Nissan Forklift in Marengo, Illinois currently employs 350 hard-working constituents. We hope that in the near future there may be more positive news concerning Japan's foreign direct investments in Illinois.

Mr. Chairman, I am very concerned about the direction of the U.S.-Japan alliance in the aftermath of the historic election last year that brought Prime Minister Hatoyama's government into power. With regard to the relocation of the Futenma Marine Air Station in Okinawa, I find the Prime Minister's position rather troubling because it calls into question an agreement between two governments solely for political reasons. Both the U.S. and Japan have invested heavily into the transfer of forces, and after 13 years of negotiations I strongly believe the time to talk is now over.

The relationship between the U.S. and Japan remains strong despite the current difficulty regarding Okinawa. As we enter the 50th anniversary of our alliance with Japan, it is important to remember that this partnership is too

important to leave on autopilot. As friends, our two countries have worked through difficult times in the past, and I have no doubt we can get through this mess now.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished guests.